

First records for Somalia of Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*, Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* and Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*

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Premières mentions pour la Somalie de l'Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata*, du Circaète Jean-le-blanc *Circaetus gallicus* et du Traquet à poitrine rousse *Oenanthe bottae*. À l'occasion d'une visite à la région autonome du Somaliland en mai 2010, trois espèces ont été observées pour la première fois en Somalie. Le 22 mai, un couple d'aigles a été photographié près de la Forêt de Daalo (à environ 10°43'53.8"N 47°17'49.2"E), dont la femelle était un Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata* et le mâle possédait des caractéristiques qui suggèrent qu'il s'agissait d'un Aigle fascié *A. spilogaster* ou d'un hybride *A. spilogaster* × *fasciata*. Le 28 mai, un Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus* a été noté à Busti (10°16'41.5"N 45°04'0.1"E). Un Traquet à poitrine rousse *Oenanthe bottae* a été photographié le 19 mai près de Tog Wajaale (09°38'17.9"N 43°24'36.4"E).

We visited Somaliland, north-west Somalia, on 17–31 May 2010. Based on our visit, we have detailed numerous range extensions in Mills & Cohen (2015) and highlighted the endemic and range-restricted avifauna and birding potential of Somaliland (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Here we document three new country records for Somalia.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

In the late afternoon of 22 May 2010 we observed a pair of eagles *Aquila* sp., either African Hawk Eagle *A. spilogaster* or Bonelli's Eagle *A. fasciata*, on a rocky slope just south of the entrance to Daalo Forest Reserve, at c.10°43'53.8"N 47°17'49.2"E. African Hawk Eagle is widespread in Somaliland (Ash & Miskell 1998) and similar in structure and plumage to Bonelli's Eagle (Brown *et al.* 1982, Kemp & Kemp 1998, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Redman *et al.* 2009, Knobel 2012), which had not previously been recorded in Somalia (Ash & Miskell 1998). The female (as judged by her

Figures 1–2. Pair of eagles *Aquila* sp., near Daalo Forest, Somalia, 22 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Couple d'aigles *Aquila* sp., près de la Forêt de Daalo, Somalie, 22 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)





Figures 3–5. Female Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*, near Daalo Forest, Somalia, 22 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata* femelle, près de la Forêt de Daalo, Somalie, 22 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Figure 6. Male eagle *Aquila* sp., near Daalo Forest, Somalia, 22 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Aigle *Aquila* sp. mâle, près de la Forêt de Daalo, Somalie, 22 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

adjacent to each other, in another tree (Fig. 2). The heavily streaked underparts, dark subterminal tail-band and broad, dark trailing edge to the wing identified both as adults (Forsman 1999, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Redman *et al.* 2009). The female was clearly identified as a Bonelli's Eagle and distinguished from African Hawk Eagle (AHE) on the basis of the following characters (Brown *et al.* 1982, Beaman & Madge 1998, Clark 1999, Forsman 1999, Svensson *et al.* 1999, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Redman *et al.* 2009, Knobel 2012): (1) a large white patch on the back, as shown in Figs. 2–4 (not present in AHE); (2) very faint darker barring on the grey tail above the dark terminal tail-band, as shown in Figs. 3–4 (this barring is more distinct in AHE); (3) primary bases that contrasted only slightly with the primary tips when viewed from above (see Figs. 3–4; primary bases contrast strongly in AHE, creating pale 'windows' on the upperwing); (4) distinctly medium brown face (Fig. 5; black in AHE); (5) dark trousers that showed as a dark patch on the rear flanks in flight (Fig. 5; AHE has pale trousers); and (6) mid-grey remiges with a faint trailing edge to the wing (Fig. 5; AHE has white or very pale grey remiges, with a strongly contrasting dark trailing edge).

The male was very similar in plumage to the female, but was not observed from behind in flight. As illustrated by our photographs, it differed in two important respects from the female, both of which suggest African Hawk Eagle: when perched, no white patch was visible on the back (Fig. 2) and remiges were distinctly paler grey than those of the female, with a very distinct trailing edge to the wing (Fig. 6). According to D. Forsman (*in litt.* 2010), the combination of adult underparts (clean white below with fine black streaking) and

significantly larger size) and male were perched on adjacent branches of a small tree near the track (Fig. 1). After a few minutes the male, followed by the female, flew just overhead and landed, again



Figure 7. Daalo is a mountainous area at c.2,000 m altitude comprising precipitous limestone cliffs, rocky scrublands and relict *Juniperus procera* forests, suitable habitat for Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Daalo est une zone montagneuse à environ 2.000 m d'altitude, avec des falaises calcaires, des parties broussailleuses et rocheuses et des forêts de *Juniperus procera* – un habitat approprié pour l'Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata* (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

bold trailing edge to the wing is never present in Bonelli's Eagle.

However, a number of features not typical of African Hawk Eagle are shown by this bird, raising the possibility that it might be a hybrid: the remiges, especially the secondaries, were distinctly barred, as seen in Fig. 6 (unbarred or faintly barred in AHE); a brown patch was visible on the rear flanks (not present in AHE); and the face was medium brown (not black as in AHE).

The occurrence of Bonelli's Eagle at Daalo Forest Reserve, a mountainous area c.2,000 m above sea level and comprising precipitous limestone cliffs, rocky scrublands and relict *Juniperus procera* forests (Fig. 7), is perhaps not surprising as the species has been discovered breeding in similar habitat in Forêt du Day in Djibouti (Welch & Welch 1984, Redman *et al.* 2009), <300 km distant. Bonelli's Eagle also occurs in mountainous habitat on the north side of the Red Sea in Yemen (Porter & Aspinall 2010).

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

On 28 May we photographed a Short-toed Snake Eagle in typical plumage, soaring over the edge of rocky hills near Busti at 10°16'41.5"N 45°04'0.1"E (Fig. 8). The heavily barred and spotted underwing-coverts eliminate Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *C. beaudouini*, Brown Snake Eagle *C. cinereus* and adult Black-chested Snake Eagle *C. pectoralis* (Clark 2000). Second-plumage (subadult) Black-chested Snake Eagle, which can sometimes show this pattern on the underwing-coverts, should have retained the dark juvenile



Figure 8. Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, near Busti, Somalia, 28 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus*, près de Busti, Somalie, 28 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

secondaries (Clark 2000), which this bird did not. Although Short-toed Snake Eagle is a common Palearctic migrant to Ethiopia, this record is nonetheless surprising as the species is very rare east of the Rift Valley, and there are just two May records in Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009). Short-toed Snake Eagle has subsequently been recorded in Somaliland at Daalo, on 16–17 September 2010, and on the Ban Cade Plains, on 18 September 2010 (N. Borrow *in Bull. ABC* 18: 104; *in litt.* 2010).

Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*

On 19 May we photographed one on the plains just west of Tog Wajaale at 09°38'17.9"N 43°24'36.4"E. It was identified by its clear white throat and upper breast, contrasting with the orange-rufous underparts (palest in the centre and richest on the breast-sides), black face and white supercilium extending to just behind the eye (Figs. 9–10). The upperparts and wing were



Figures 9–11. Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*, near Tog Wajaale, Somalia, 19 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Traquet à poitrine rousse *Oenanthe bottae*, près de Tog Wajaale, Somalie, 19 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

mid-brown, and the outer tail feathers were black over the distal half, with the black on the inner rectrices extending towards the tail base, creating an inverted 'T' shape (Fig. 11). This combination of features eliminates all other species (Redman *et al.* 2009, Porter & Aspinall 2010). Red-breasted Wheatear is known from the Ethiopian highlands to the west, and Yemen to the north (Ash & Atkins 2009, Porter & Aspinall 2010).

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